

Upper GI endoscopy

What is an upper GI endoscopy?

An **upper GI endoscopy**, also known as a gastroscopy, is a minimally invasive procedure that allows your doctor to examine the upper part of your digestive system, including your oesophagus (food pipe), stomach, and the first part of your small intestine (duodenum). A thin, flexible tube with a camera (endoscope) is passed through your mouth into your digestive tract, allowing the doctor to view the lining on a screen and identify any abnormalities, such as inflammation, ulcers, or growths.

Why might you need an upper GI endoscopy?

Your doctor may recommend an upper GI endoscopy if you have symptoms such as:

- Persistent heartburn or acid reflux
- Difficulty swallowing (dysphagia)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomach pain or bloating
- Vomiting blood or passing black stools

The procedure can help diagnose conditions such as gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD), ulcers, Barrett's oesophagus, coeliac disease, and stomach or oesophageal cancer. It may also be used to treat certain conditions, such as removing polyps, stopping bleeding, or widening a narrowed oesophagus.

How do you prepare for an upper GI endoscopy?

Before the procedure, you'll need to avoid eating or drinking for 6-8 hours to ensure your stomach is empty. This allows the doctor to get a clear view of your digestive system. You may also be asked to stop taking certain medications, such as blood thinners, for a few days before the procedure.

Your doctor or nurse will provide specific instructions based on your medical history and current medications. It's important to follow these guidelines to ensure the procedure goes smoothly.

What happens during the procedure?

The procedure typically takes around 10-15 minutes and is performed as an outpatient, meaning you can go home the same day.

Here's what to expect:

- You'll be given a local anaesthetic spray to numb your throat, and you may be offered a sedative to help you relax
- The doctor will gently insert the endoscope through your mouth and guide it down your oesophagus into your stomach and duodenum
- Air may be introduced through the endoscope to inflate your digestive tract slightly, making it easier to see
- The camera on the endoscope will send images to a monitor, allowing the doctor to look for any abnormalities
- If necessary, small tissue samples (biopsies) can be taken during the procedure for further testing

The procedure is usually painless, although you may feel some mild discomfort or bloating from the air introduced into your stomach.

What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure, you'll be monitored for a short time to ensure you're recovering well, especially if you've had sedation. You may have a mild sore throat, which usually goes away within a day.

If a biopsy was taken or treatment was carried out during the endoscopy, your doctor will explain any findings and discuss the next steps. Most people can resume normal activities the following day.

Are there any risks?

An upper GI endoscopy is a very safe procedure, but like any medical intervention, it carries some risks. These include:

- A sore throat or bloating (common but temporary)
- Minor bleeding, especially if a biopsy was taken
- Rare complications such as infection, perforation of the digestive tract, or an adverse reaction to sedation

Your doctor will explain the risks and benefits in detail before the procedure.

How can an upper GI endoscopy help?

An upper GI endoscopy is a valuable diagnostic tool that can provide accurate answers about your symptoms and guide effective treatment. Whether you need a diagnosis or a therapeutic procedure, our team at Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic is here to support you.

Why choose Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic?

At Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic, we're committed to providing exceptional care in a safe and comfortable environment. Our experienced team of specialists uses state-of-the-art technology to ensure accurate diagnoses and effective treatments. We'll guide you through every step of the process, answering your questions and addressing your concerns.

Contact us

If you're experiencing symptoms that may require an upper GI endoscopy or have been referred by your doctor, contact us today to book your appointment. Early diagnosis and treatment can make a big difference in your health and quality of life.